

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
18 JULY 1975

In From the Cold

CIA Chief Looks Back

By JAMES WIEGHART

Washington, July 17 — For a guy who has been serving as the nation's number one punching bag for the last seven months, CIA Director William E. Colby looks to be in pretty good shape.

Colby, 55, is a career spy who rose to the top of the country's premier spy agency two years ago, just in time to catch the flak for some CIA dirty tricks that went beyond the bounds of the agency's charter.

CAPITOL STUFF

In the last seven months, Colby has spent much of his time testifying behind closed doors before the Rockefeller Commission and the Select Senate Committee on Intelligence about these alleged dirty tricks—illegal domestic spying, participation in assassination plots against foreign leaders (on at least one occasion, in league with the Mafia), administering LSD and other drugs to unsuspecting subjects and the like.

Virtually all of the wrongdoing goes back years, to the cold war era when the nation supposedly was locked in a death struggle with international communism and good red-blooded American spies were expected to deal roughly with the other side.

Unfortunately for Colby, the CIA misdeeds he is being asked to account for by the Senate committee and others are being scrutinized in the benign era of detente, with a new, post-Vietnam, post-Watergate standard of morality as a measuring stick.

So, when he is not being interrogated by senators behind closed doors, Colby spends a good deal of his time answering questions posed by reporters on TV panels, at press conferences or, like today, sitting in a bright yellow chair by a coffee table in his airy office overlooking the Potomac River at the agency's sprawling headquarters in suburban Langley, Va.

A thin, wiry man about 5 foot 7, weighing about 160 pounds, with icy blue eyes and transparent plastic rim glasses, Colby looks and talks more like a lawyer — which he is — than a spy.



William Colby
Cold War remembered

Dates to Cold War Era

He won't answer direct questions about specific allegations of CIA wrongdoing except to concede that there was some. He rejects the adjective "massive" which has been used to describe the extent of illegal domestic spying by the CIA, but agrees that point is debatable.

"Look, we did some things that we should not have," he said with the wave of a hand. "That was wrong. We have furnished the information to the proper authorities and we are not doing those things anymore."

Three Main Reasons

How did it happen? "Well, there are three main reasons," he said. "One is the old cold war tradition — 'Go do it and don't tell me about it.' So there wasn't much external supervision. The better the external supervision, the better internal supervision."

"Second, it was an era of intense challenge ... There was a great sense of urgency ... The feeling that we were a nation under attack ... we were under attack. This stimulated the desire to do that extra bit ... We looked for justification for actions that seemed necessary."

"And third, this is a great big organization. In any big organization, mistakes are made, however well intentioned. Don't forget, we're looking over a period covering 25 years."

Colby doesn't resent the investigations, both official and by the press, agreeing that "this is all part of our system." But the sensational disclosures have taken a toll.

Sees Tighter Supervision

"A lot of people and foreign intelligence agencies who have worked with us are pulling back, fearful of exposure," Colby said. "A number of persons we have tried to get as agents have turned us down."

"It is not so much that we are under investigation, or even that we are under attack that creates the problem. It is the possibility of leakage—the exposure—that hurts."

Colby believes that the investigations will lead to tighter supervision, by the Congress and by the executive branch. This will not pose major problems for the CIA as long as it can continue to safeguard its secrets. He is not at all apprehensive that the avalanche of publicity on agency misdeeds will lead to a public demand for the abolition of the CIA.

"I'm not worried about that," he said. "There is a great deal of support for intelligence in this country — an awareness that for our own safety we need to know what is going on around the world. There may be differences in opinion about how we should go about it, but there is general agreement that we need to have a strong intelligence service."